

VZCZCXRO5999
RR RUEHLN RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHDBU #1362 2010856
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 200856Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8100
INFO RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 9407
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1713
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1701
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1672
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1685
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1640
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1607
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1611
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1222
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1675
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS 1001

UNCLAS DUSHANBE 001362

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, DRL, S/P
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN'S NEW MEDIA COALITION NOT ENTIRELY INDEPENDENT

¶1. (SBU) Three prominent media associations formed the new Partnership for Democracy in June, a media coalition group designed to address misunderstandings among journalistic bodies and foster improved relations between mass media and the government. However, despite the group's good intentions, it appears it is subject to considerable government influence.

¶2. (SBU) The three organizations in the coalition are the National Association of Independent Mass Media in Tajikistan (NANSMIT), the Tajik Association of Independent Electronic Media (TAIEM), and the Media Alliance of Tajikistan (MAT). The Chairman of TAIEM, Muso Asozoda is also the Head of Administration for the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan, President Rahmonov's political party. Even NANSMIT, the self-proclaimed darling of the international community, and MAT are not truly independent organizations. Embassy sources say that even though these organizations may ideally want to reform media conditions in the country, all three have connections within the government and are soft on government criticism, when they publish opposing views at all.

¶3. (SBU) According to press reports, the group's three-pronged strategy includes each organization taking the lead on one of three goals: reform media legislation, establish a state body to regulate relations between the media and government, and set up a body to regulate journalistic ethics and relations within the media community. However, during EmbOffs' meeting July 18 with NANSMIT Chairman Nuriddin Karshiboev, he stressed strong government cooperation more so than in public reports. For instance, he described the organization's first two goals as reforming media legislation and introducing a new law on mass media so that media groups can better cooperate with the government, and establishing a new council to include the government and mass media which would strengthen cooperation between the two. Nowhere in Partnership for Democracy's written goals does it stress the need for a more free and independent media or legislation reform for transparent government regulations. The group also plans to offer membership to the Tajik Union of Journalists, a well-known government-directed body.

14. (SBU) COMMENT: Although the organization is still in its early stages and its true intentions cannot yet be judged, all signs point to Partnership for Democracy as another pre-election government ploy. This coalition allows the government to more closely and succinctly work with all mass media organizations in the country and silence opposition voices. It would be easier for the government to hide behind a seemingly independent organization to control media activities than directly pressure the media with a heavy hand. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND